

July 6, 1993

1. Transmitted is a revision to Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration Manual M-1, "Operations," Part I, "Medical Administration Activities," Chapter 20, "Examinations--C&P/other Federal Agencies."

2. Principal changes are:

a. **Paragraph 20.03:** Changed to indicate C&P (compensation and pension) examinations will be requested by VA Regional Offices utilizing the AMIE (Automated Medical Information Exchange) C&P request option. Request for C&P examinations will be electronically transmitted to the VA health care facility within whose primary service area the veteran resides.

b. **Paragraph 20.04:** Changed to indicate that requests for examinations to be conducted at other VA health care facilities will be forwarded promptly using the AMIE transfer C&P request option. The transferring facility must contact the receiving VA medical center to obtain concurrence prior to initiating the transfer.

c. **Paragraph 20.07:** Old paragraph 20.07 is deleted in its entirety, and subsequent paragraphs renumbered.

d. **Paragraph 20.12:** Changed paid on fee-basis from .27 to .01; and to indicate the VA facility will ensure that services were rendered as billed, prior to payment.

e. **Paragraph 20.13c:** Changed to insert all C&P examinations will be conducted in accordance with the format set forth on the AMIE examination request work sheets.

f. **Paragraph 20.14:** Deletes from paragraph the use of VA Form 70-3542c.

g. **Paragraph 20.17:** Changed to insert that AMIE examination requests will be transferred to the appropriate VA facility using the AMIE transfer function.

h. **Paragraph 20.23a:** Last sentence of original paragraph has been deleted.

i. **Appendix 20A:** Is deleted in its entirety.

### 3. Filing Instructions

#### Remove pages

20-i through 20-ii  
20-1 through 20A-1

#### Insert pages

20-i through 20-ii  
20-1 through 20-8

4. **RESCISSIONS:** M-1, part I, chapter 20, dated July 7, 1989, and change 1; and VHA Circular 10-88-55.

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## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 20. EXAMINATIONS--C&P/OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
20.01 Policy .....	20-1
20.02 Definitions .....	20-1
20.03 Requests for Examinations .....	20-1
20.04 Types of Examination .....	20-1
20.05 Requests for Claims Folders .....	20-2
20.06 Advance Preparation of Forms .....	20-2
20.07 Sufficiency of the Report .....	20-2
20.08 Photographs .....	20-3
20.09 Examination for Eligibility Determinations .....	20-3
20.10 Conditions Which Require Care Noted on Examination .....	20-3
20.11 Fee-Basis Activity .....	20-3
20.12 Utilization of Staff and Fee-Basis Facilities .....	20-4
20.13 Scheduling .....	20-4
20.14 Undelivered Notices to Report -- Postponements .....	20-5
20.15 Observation and Examination for Compensation and Pension Purposes .....	20-5
20.16 Office of Jurisdiction .....	20-5
20.17 Employee - Veteran C&P Examinations .....	20-6
20.18 Authorizations From Other Federal Agencies .....	20-6
20.19 Charges .....	20-6
20.20 Billings .....	20-6
20.21 Forms .....	20-6
20.22 Centralized Controls .....	20-6
20.23 Timeliness .....	20-7
20.24 Reports .....	20-8
20.25 Quality .....	20-8
20.26 Adequacy of Examinations .....	20-8
20.27 Records Disposal .....	20-8
20.28 Medical Records .....	20-8

## **RESCISSIONS**

The following material is rescinded:

### **1. Manuals**

M-1, part I, chapter 20, dated July 5, 1988

M-1, part I, chapter 20, dated July 7, 1989, and change 1, dated August 28, 1991

### **2. Circulars/Directives**

10-88-55

**CHAPTER 20. EXAMINATIONS--C&P/OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES****20.01 POLICY**

a. VHA (Veterans Health Administration) is responsible for processing examinations required in connection with the adjudication of claims for VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) benefits as quickly as possible.

b. A comprehensive general medical examination will usually provide both the diagnosis and symptomatology sufficient to identify a condition and determine the extent to which a veteran is disabled.

c. Specialist examinations are to be conducted only when specifically requested by the regional office on AMIE (Automated Medical Information Exchange) C&P (Compensation and Pension) examination request. Any need for a consultation found during the course of the examination should be approved when deemed necessary by the Associate Chief of Staff for Ambulatory Care or Clinic Director, as appropriate.

**20.02 DEFINITIONS**

a. **Clinic Director.** This term includes Associate Chief of Staff for Ambulatory Care; Chief, Ambulatory Care Section; or where neither of these two positions exist, the physician who has been delegated responsibility for clinical ambulatory care activities. This person is responsible for the professional aspects of the program including adequate and timely completion of examinations.

b. **Chief, MAS (Medical Administration Service).** This term includes the Chief, MAS, of a VA medical center and the Chief, Medical Administrative Officer, of an independent outpatient clinic. This person is responsible for all administrative aspects of the examination activity.

**20.03 REQUESTS FOR EXAMINATIONS**

a. C&P examinations will be requested by VA Regional Offices utilizing the AMIE C&P examination request option. Request for C&P examinations will be electronically transmitted to the VA health care facility within whose primary service area the veteran resides. Examinations will be performed to establish disability ratings, in conjunction with benefits claims, to establish entitlement to a rehabilitation program under 38 U.S.C. (United States Code) chapter 31, for insurance purposes and for determination of mental competency.

b. Examinations for medical care will also be provided to determine need for hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, and outpatient care. Examinations may also be conducted for beneficiaries of other Federal agencies, VA employees, prospective VA employees, and for veterans of nations allied with the United States during World War I and World War II who are eligible for VA care.

**20.04 TYPES OF EXAMINATION**

Requests for examinations must specify the types of examinations needed and, if necessary, any special reports and/or studies which are required. The VA health care facility receiving requests determines where and how the examinations are to be

conducted. This determination will be made as soon as possible after receipt of the requests. Requests for examinations to be conducted at other VA health care facilities will be forwarded promptly using the AMIE Transfer C&P request option. The transferring facility must contact the receiving VA medical center to obtain concurrence prior to transferring the examination.

#### **20.05 REQUESTS FOR CLAIMS FOLDERS**

a. Claims folders will not be forwarded to the VA health care facility or clinic with requests for examination except when the claim is for service connection for post-traumatic stress disorder or when the Board of Veterans Appeals or the Rating Board request the claim folder be made available to the examining physician.

b. If information from a claims folder is desired for scheduling purposes, informal telephone contact with the originating office will be utilized. Claims folders will not routinely be requested for review prior to or during examination, instead VA health care facility personnel will utilize telephone or other contact with adjudication personnel to obtain desired information.

c. In those rare instances when a claims folder must be reviewed by medical personnel for examination purposes, the claims folder may be requested. Such requests for claims folders will be limited to those required by the examining physician and will be ordered in sufficient time to arrive 1 full-day prior to examination to permit a review by the physician. Effective controls will be established to ensure that there is no needless transfer of folders. Claims folders thus obtained for review by medical personnel may be held for no more than 3 working days, following completion of the examination, except when a longer period is necessary for compelling reasons.

#### **20.06 ADVANCE PREPARATION OF FORMS**

a. The reception activity will receive material from the examination activity sufficiently in advance to allow necessary processing and preparation of required forms before the examinee reports.

b. When a request is made for a POW (Prisoner of War) examination, VA Form 10-0048, Former POW Medical History, will be mailed to the veteran with instructions to complete the form and bring it on the date of the examination.

#### **20.07 SUFFICIENCY OF THE REPORT**

The Adjudication Division or requesting agency will determine the sufficiency of the report. If the examination report is returned as unsatisfactory, it must be accompanied by a request for specific information. If an explanation cannot lead to acceptance by Adjudication, the Clinic Director, or designee, will prepare an additional examination report and/or take other indicated action which will resolve the problem.

**20.08 PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photographs necessary to illustrate deformities, scars, eruptions, and other visible abnormalities which might influence the rating for degree of disability will be taken with VA medical center equipment. When this is not feasible, the Clinic Director will authorize procurement of necessary photographs (not retouched) from local sources.

**NOTE:** *The fee authorized for this service will not be in excess of charges made to the general public for similar work.*

**20.09 EXAMINATION FOR ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS**

When staff care is authorized under the tentative eligibility of 38 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) 17.35(b), the veteran will be given a general medical examination and psychiatric examination when appropriate. The examination report will be attached to the VA Form 10-7131, Exchange of Beneficiary Information and Request for Administrative and Adjudicative Action, requesting rating action. If a complete general medical examination cannot be done, copies of available findings and reports will be attached to the VA Form 10-7131.

**20.10 CONDITIONS WHICH REQUIRE CARE NOTED ON EXAMINATION**

If during an outpatient examination a suspicious lesion or any disability which is not service-connected or adjunct to a service-connected disability, but which medically requires further study or treatment is disclosed, action will be taken as follows:

a. The examinee or in case of a minor, the parent/guardian will be fully informed unless there is a sound reason which contraindicates such action. This can be accomplished in person, by telephone, telegram, letter, or other appropriate means.

b. If the condition noted is one which may require hospital care, the veteran will be offered an opportunity to apply for hospitalization in a VA health care facility. If such care is desired, assistance will be provided in completing an appropriate application. The medical certificate will be completed to show the medical findings revealed by the examination. Depending on the urgency of the situation, the application will be referred either to the nearest appropriate VA medical center, or arrangements will be made by telephone for the veteran's immediate admission to a VA medical facility.

c. If it is medically unwise to inform the veteran regarding the condition noted and/or the veteran does not wish to apply for care at a VA medical center or the condition does not warrant such care, the veteran will be requested to give permission for the VA to send a report to the private physician. Name and address of the physician as well as written consent for release of medical information will be obtained in the customary manner.

**20.11 FEE-BASIS ACTIVITY**

a. C&P examinations will be conducted, insofar as possible, by the VA medical center within whose PSA (Primary Service Area) the veteran/claimant resides. Special cases, by accepted negotiations, may be referred to VA health facilities which are staffed and equipped to perform the required examinations.

b. C&P examinations which cannot be accomplished at or by the requested VA medical center may be provided on a fee-basis. In keeping with the approach to the decentralization of fee-basis, it will be the responsibility of the requested medical center to address and manage its C&P Fee-basis Program.

## **20.12 UTILIZATION OF STAFF AND FEE-BASIS FACILITIES**

a. C&P examinations will ordinarily be provided to the extent practical at VA medical centers. When the demand for examinations is greater than what can be provided by VA staff, the medical center Director may appoint a physician to conduct these examinations in accordance with VHA Supplement to MP-5, part II, chapter 2, paragraph 2.28. Consideration should be given to providing these examinations during evenings and weekends. When other circumstances such as health of the patient, distance to be traveled or availability of medical specialties give sufficient justification, these examinations may be provided in the community on a fee-basis:

(1) Both methods identified can be paid for on a fee-basis using .01 dollars.

(2) Prior to payment the VA facility should ensure that services were rendered as billed. **NOTE:** *Basic to the decision in each case is a determination as to which procedure is most cost effective to the government.*

b. Fee-basis C&P examination will not be performed by the use of VA salaried, full-time resident or other full-time Federal Government physicians. Such a practice would constitute a breach of the general public policy against an agency contracting with its own employees when the services can be obtained elsewhere.

c. VA Form 10-7079, Authorization for Fee Outpatient Medical Services, will be issued promptly for examinations to be conducted on a fee basis. Appropriate form(s) will be forwarded with the authorization.

## **20.13 SCHEDULING**

a. C&P examinations are considered as high priority workload and will be processed accordingly within the priority guidelines established in Chapter 16, Section X. Examination or reexamination for terminal patients will be accomplished as soon as possible without regard to the priorities.

b. If an examinee appears for a C&P examination prior to the scheduled date, reception personnel will consult with examination personnel, review the schedule, and make every effort to have the examination conducted.

c. C&P examinations should be conducted in accordance with the format set forth on the AMIE C&P examination worksheets and IB 11-56, Physician's Guide for Disability Evaluation Examinations. With few exceptions, good general medical examinations with a complete report on the pertinent complaints and functional impairments are sufficient for rating purposes.

(1) When a request has been made for a general medical examination with special attention to particular disabilities, the AMIE worksheets and IB 11-56, will assist the physician in completing the examination. Accordingly, rating boards will not request specialist examinations except where such examinations are absolutely essential for adjudication purposes.

(2) The medical examiner has the authority and responsibility to expand the general medical examination in the individual case if the medical examiner considers a specialist examination to be necessary. In C&P claims, AMIE examination requests, prepared in Adjudication Divisions, will include the known pertinent diagnoses and body systems involved in the requested examination.

(3) In those unusual cases in which need for a specialist examination is definite, the request for a specialist examination will be stated in positive terms on the AMIE examination request.

#### **20.14 UNDELIVERED NOTICES TO REPORT--POSTPONEMENTS**

a. When VA Form 21-2507, Notice To Report, or the AMIE examination request, is returned as undelivered, MAS personnel will attempt to make telephone contact with the veteran in order to identify a new mailing address. In those instances where a telephone number is not available and a number cannot be located through other means, MAS personnel will return VA Form 21-2507, to the Regional Office indicating that the examination could not be scheduled since the veteran's address and telephone number were incorrect.

b. If a veteran requests that the examination be postponed for a valid reason or fails to report due to inclement weather, MAS personnel will reschedule that veteran's appointment(s), but only once.

c. If the veteran fails to report for a scheduled appointment(s) without having contacted the medical center or the veteran's reason for canceling an existing appointment is not justifiable, MAS personnel will release the AMIE examination request to the Regional Office indicating the reason the examination request has been returned.

d. When a veteran contacts a medical center to cancel an examination and request the examination be rescheduled, the reappointment(s) must be rescheduled within 30 days from the original appointment date(s). The additional processing days to reschedule an appointment will be manually tracked and must be backed out of the total examination day count.

#### **20.15 OBSERVATION AND EXAMINATION FOR COMPENSATION GENERAL AND PENSION PURPOSES**

AMIE examination requests, requesting hospitalization for O&E (observation and examination) will be referred to the nearest suitable VA medical center. When a VA health care facility receives an AMIE examination request, and the Clinic Director believes that O&E is required in order to evaluate fully the veteran's disabilities, or the VA medical center staff believes that the examination can be conducted on an outpatient basis, the Adjudication Officer or designee will be contacted by telephone to request such a change. Final action will be based on the agreement reached.

#### **20.16 OFFICE OF JURISDICTION**

The VA Regional Offices having jurisdiction over employee veteran records are listed in M23-1, Part I, Chapter 13.



**20.17 EMPLOYEE-VETERAN C&P EXAMINATIONS**

The Adjudication Division will identify those AMIE examination requests which pertain to employee-veterans, and the VA medical centers at which they are currently employed. Administrative personnel of the receiving VA health care facility will arrange for examination at the appropriate medical installation nearest the home address of the examinee other than the one at which the veteran is employed. The AMIE examination request will be transferred to the appropriate VA facility using the AMIE transfer option.

**20.18 AUTHORIZATIONS FROM OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES**

In each instance, a letter of authority will be issued by the requesting agency to either the individual to be examined or the clinic requested to accomplish the examination. The letter of authority will specify the type and/or extent of the examination desired. (See Ch. 15, Sec. IV.)

**20.19 CHARGES**

Services provided by VA to other Government agencies will be subject to reimbursement at prescribed current rates.

**20.20 BILLINGS**

A statement of services rendered will be forwarded to the Fiscal Service for billing of the agency concerned. This information, with two copies of each letter of authority, must be forwarded prior to the close of the monthly accounting period in which the examination was completed.

**20.21 FORMS**

Examinations will be reported on SF 88, Report of Medical Examination, unless specific forms are provided for this purpose by the requesting agency. These reports will be forwarded to the requesting agency as soon as possible after completion of the examination.

**20.22 CENTRALIZED CONTROLS**

a. **Examination Request File.** AMIE is the central file for all examination requests received via the decentralized hospital computer system. All examination requests received outside of AMIE will be maintained in such a manner that the status of a pending examination can be ascertained promptly at any time, and so that preparation of required reports can be easily accomplished. The date of receipt will be entered on all requests.

b. **Claims Folder Control**

**NOTE:** *Claims folders will be centrally filed, in alphabetical sequence, with an appropriate chargeout system to readily ascertain location at all times.*

(1) Requests for claims folders will be forwarded to the Administrative Division of the Regional Office of jurisdiction. VA Form 70-7216a, Request for and/or Notice of Transfer of Veterans Records, or VA Form 70-3770, Requisition for Numbered Folder, must be used, as appropriate.

July 6, 1993

M-1, Part I  
Chapter 20

M-1, Part I  
Chapter 20

July 6, 1993

(2) Following completion of the examination and as soon as practicable thereafter, the claims folder will be returned to the regional office. Only in unusual circumstances shall a claims folder be remained for more than 3 days after the examination is completed.

**c. Recharge of Claims Folder**

(1) When a request for examination is referred by a VA health care facility to another VA health care facility, the claims folder may accompany the examination referral when appropriate notification of recharge is made to the administrative division of the Regional Office of jurisdiction.

(2) The VA medical center which conducted the examination will return the claims folder to the Regional Office.

**20.23 TIMELINESS**

a. Plans will be developed and kept current for the proper and timely completion of C&P examinations.

(1) Administrative personnel will review periodically all pending files and take action to prevent accumulation of backlogs.

(2) A follow-up system will be established to control examinations authorized to fee physicians, to ensure that they are completed within the established time frames.

(3) Payments for services will be made promptly.

(4) Ordinarily, reports of completed examinations will be forwarded to the requesting office within 3 workdays after the examination date.

b. The following time frames for each specific phase of a C&P examination are established to assist the VA medical center, the clinic, and the Regional Directors in effectively controlling this activity:

(1) Scheduling of examination(s) and test(s) will be completed within 3 days of receipt of an AMIE examination request.

(2) Examination(s) and/or required test(s) will be completed within 30 days of receipt of an AMIE examination request.

(3) Documentation of examination report(s) and/or result(s) of test(s) will be completed and available within 2 days of the completion of the examination(s) and/or test(s).

(4) All completed examinations will be returned to the requesting VA Regional Office within 3 days of completion of the examination(s) and/or test(s).

c. AMIS Report Segment 290 will be submitted monthly and will report the actual number of pending examinations exceeding the time frames established within subparagraph b. The report will further identify the number of examinations pending return to adjudication which are:

(1) Ninety days old or less;

(2) One hundred and twenty days old or less;

July 6, 1993

M-1, Part I  
Chapter 20

M-1, Part I  
Chapter 20

July 6, 1993

- (3) One hundred and fifty days old or less;
- (4) One hundred and eighty days old or less;

(5) One hundred and eighty-one to 365 days old; and

(6) Those over 365 days old.

d. RCS (Reports Control Symbol) 10-0004. When there are C&P examination requests pending for 181 days or more (365 days or more for foreign), the medical center Director will analyze the examination activity and report to the Regional Director on a monthly basis, the reason in each specific case, and the date each examination report will be forwarded to adjudication. The report, identified by RCS 10-0004, will be submitted in original with one copy through the Regional Director's Office to MAS, (13\_/161B).

#### **20.24 ADEQUACY OF EXAMINATIONS**

Inadequate reports of medical examinations adversely affect the payment of C&P and other benefits. This problem will be reduced to a minimum by means of a continuing analysis of reasons for the return of reports considered unsatisfactory for the purposes for which requested.

#### **20.25 RECORDS DISPOSAL**

a. The completed original examination worksheets and supporting test results will be filed in the veteran's medical record and kept on file at the medical center.

b. The worksheets for each examination will be electronically released back to the requesting VA Regional Office as outlined in the AMIE system training and implementation guide book. If there are supporting documents for any part of an examination that cannot be entered into the system for electronic transfer to the Regional Office, the entire exam report and supporting documentation package must be sent (preferably telefax) to the appropriate Regional Office immediately after releasing the C&P request.

c. Facilities that do not have a link between the requesting VA Regional Office, must send (preferably telefax) the results to the requesting VA Regional Office, and file a copy in the veteran's CHR (Consolidated Health Record).

#### **20.26 MEDICAL RECORDS**

Copies of completed C&P examinations will be filed in the veteran's CHR.